

battle of bedford row

LIMERICK'S PRIVILEGED CLASSES have a well-defined drill when they come under fire: they run for cover to some leading legal mouthpiece, preferably one with a reputation for political influence. Doctors are no exception to this rule as a current local case clearly shows.

The October issue of the 'Limerick Socialist' contained an article dealing with the application made by Dr. S. Crowe to the Mid-Western Health Board for financial aid for the Bedford Row Hospital. As a follow-up to the article the delegates to the Limerick Council of Trade Unions at their November meeting, unanimously decided to send a deputation to the Mid-Western Health Board to question the application.

The Trades' Council debate was reported in the 'Limerick Leader' and the 'Limerick Weekly Echo' and the matter became 'hot' news. Even the 'Whitewash King', Noel Smith, threw caution to the birds and struck out with an article in the 'Sunday Independent' and a piece in his weekly 'Clare Champion' column.

But the 'touchy' Bedford Row doctors did not relish all this attention. They took time out from their work of delivering babies and signing and cashing cheques to consult the well-known local firm of solicitors, D. G. O'Malley & Co., 10 Glentworth Street. Soon copies of a letter from the doctors' solicitors were sent to the editors of the newspapers concerned.

The letter stated: 'We act for the management committee of Bedford Row Hospital, Limerick, on whose instructions we are writing to you as follows:



'In recent issues of your paper reference has been made to Bedford Row Hospital and in particular to certain statements purported to have been made by certain delegates of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions and which statements are false and misleading and require to be corrected.

'The hospital is a voluntary hospital. Its properties are vested in Trustees, as they have always been since the year 1889 and the hospital is run by a management committee, as has always been the case. It is erroneous to suggest that any person or persons own the hospital.

'If any monies ever accrued they were and are used to carry out essential repairs and purchase essential equipment. To suggest, as some members of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions have done, that persons made a profit or took moneys from the hospital is false and mischievous; each year a hospital report is published containing the balance sheet. Copies are sent to the Department of Health and other interested parties. ... The hospital is now running at a deficit and is faced with closure.'

The solicitors' letter achieved its purpose and none of the newspapers made any attempt to investigate or refute the doctors' claims. However, even a cursory reading of the solicitors' letter is enough

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article 44: big changes?

'IT IS MY OPINION that by removing this from our Constitution we are denying our Irish Catholic character and heritage and, worse, we are opening the door to all kinds of frightening consequences when we allow minorities to bring about changes in our Constitution.' ('Limerick Leader', 25-11-72).

'Changes in our Constitution will have to be faced on the basis of being true to our Christian moral principles.' ('Limerick Leader', 28-10-72).

The first statement is taken from a sermon given by Fr. Vincent Kavanagh on the changes in Article 44 to members of the Redemptorist Confraternity. The author of the second sentence is Dr. Henry Murphy, Catholic Bishop of Limerick. The direct conflict between the attitudes of Bishop Murphy and the director of the Confraternity offers some idea of the amount of confusion existing, nationally and locally on the subject of the deletion of the section on 'the special position of the Catholic Church.'

Dr. Murphy, who is secretary to the hierarchy, has adopted Cardinal Conway's

approach. The Cardinal has let it be widely known that he has no objection to the changes. Fr. Kavanagh has, apparently, not yet got the 'message' while he made it clear that his sermon was his personal view, it is obvious that Fr. Kavanagh was using his influence over the Confraternity members to get them to reject the changes. The content of his sermon is not only inconsistent but is also out of touch with the thinking of most members of the hierarchy, Fr. Kavanagh stated: 'This article of our Constitution is to be wiped out, we are told, because it offends Northern Protestants. We are told that its deletion would help towards a United Ireland. I believe that no minority has the right to tell us to make a change, especially when this minority is in Northern Ireland and does not come under the jurisdiction of the Constitution at all.' Dealing with Cardinal Conway's support for the change the director said: 'Cardinal Conway was speaking as a private individual and it is no harm to remember that Cardinal Conway does not come under our Constitution.'

In making these statements Fr. Kavanagh ignores the fact that Article 2 and 3 of the same Constitution specifically claim sovereignty over Northern Ireland. Unhampered by the implications of this undemocratic and illogical assertion Fr. Kavanagh went on to give his reasons for his 'no change' attitude:

'... but human nature being what it is, in order to safeguard the position of the Catholic Church in this country where ninety-seven per cent (97%) of the people are Catholics it is most necessary to have it in writing in our Constitution that the Catholic Church has a special position. ...

'The fact is that the majority of Irish people want to be ruled by the Catholic Church and they want the State to recognise the special position of their Church as the guardian of the faith professed by the majority of the citizens.

'The uncertainty of our politicians betrays a lack of confidence in themselves. They are grasping at straws. They are not sure which way they are going or how they

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BEDFORD ROW

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to show that many essential facts have been carefully avoided.

(1) It is obvious that despite the statement that the hospital has no owner or owners, the doctors concerned (or Trustees, as they modestly call themselves) are in total control of the hospital. They sign cheques, pay wages to their workers and collect bills just like the owners of other nursing and maternity homes.

(2) Despite the claim that copies of the annual report of the hospital containing a balance sheet are sent to the Department of Health 'and other interested parties', it is significant that Dr. S. Crowe, in making the case for financial aid, did not distribute copies of these reports to the members of the Mid-Western Health Board or the press. The failure to support their case with the public ventilation, of these details is, in view of the doctors' 'poor mouth', a remarkable omission.

(3) At no stage have the doctors publicly disclosed their names, and Dr. Crowe's original claim and the letter from their solicitors scrupulously avoided this area. The use of the voluntary hospital/Trustees formula does nothing to serve the public interest.

The doctors have, apparently, won the full support of the Mid-Western Health Board and silenced the press in their pursuit of a financial grant from the Department of Health. The questions, however, posed above have yet to be answered. The doctors and their solicitors have a long way to go before they satisfy the people of Limerick of their right to a public subsidy for their hospital.

arms or people?

A UNITED NATION REPORT gives the annual cost of feeding and arming the 23 million people in the armed forces of the nations of the world as 200 billion dollars. This sum exceeds the combined income of a third of the earth's population. The governments spend 25 billion dollars a year in research for military weapons but only 4 billion dollars on medical research. Thus six times more money is spent learning how to destroy people than in searching for means of saving lives. While capitalism exists, the arms race will always have priority over the human race.

blind eye

SOME MOVES are being made in America to clamp down on drug pushing. But according to the 'New York Times', a report prepared by officials of the US Central Intelligence Agency, holds out little hope of curbing the smuggling of narcotics by air and sea in southeast Asia. The reason given was that 'the most basic problem, and the one that unfortunately appears least likely of any early solution, is the corruption, collusion and indifference at some places in some governments ... that precludes more effective suppression of traffic by the governments on whose territory it takes place.' If the American government was really serious about cutting off the supply of illegal drugs, effective action could be taken in quick time. But drugs are now big business in the US, and the 'New York Times' need not look beyond its own shores for the 'corruption and collusion' which allows drugs east entry and free circulation on the American market.

ARTICLE 44

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are going to get there. But they are prepared to jettison our priceless Catholic heritage as a bait to attract Northern Protestants. Nobody respects a government for being milk and water. The Protestants of Sandy Row are laughing at us.'

Socialists will agree with Fr. Kavanagh's last sentence. The Northern Protestant community has no intention of allowing itself to be 'ruled by the Catholic Church.' It is well aware that Southern Ireland is a Catholic State and that a few minor changes in the Constitution will not bring about a modern, democratic society.

Having given some more examples of the Catholic nature of the Southern Irish State, Fr. Kavanagh described the religious basis of Irish Nationalism: 'If England had remained Catholic, we probably would be part of England today. It was our Catholic faith that put the edge on our fight for political freedom. If the men in the fight had woken up one morning and by some strange happening found that the Ireland they had been fighting for was now pagan, they would have thrown their blunderbusses and their pikes into the ditch and gone home.'

Here Fr. Kavanagh has given an accurate picture of the nature of Irish 'republicanism'. He has also given one of the reasons why the Border was established. A Catholic State was created for a Catholic people. Home Rule becomes Rome Rule. Protestantism and other ideologies were were classed as alien. The 1937 Constitution reflects this attitude, and Catholic social doctrine became institutionalised as the national code.

Fr. Kavanagh's attack on the changes leaves him behind the mainstream of Irish Catholic thought. The amendment of Article 44 will do nothing to change the social power of the Catholic Church. The Constitution is merely a reflection of this power and does not by itself bestow power. When Cardinal Conway and Bishop Murphy stated their support for the changes they were well aware of this fact. They realise that the Church's power in educational, social and political matters will not be in any way lessened by these purely formal changes.

The changes are not designed to fool Northern Protestants. The whole Referendum operation is nothing more than a cynical propaganda-exercise to lead international public opinion to believe that Southern Ireland is not a sectarian state.

Faced with this deception the attitude of Irish workers should be clear. The complete separation of church and state is the only democratic and socialist demand that can be reconciled with working class interests.



a just chronicle

'... it is sad to think that the attitude of a very small minority—no matter how just their case—can deprive a large majority of hardworking men of a just living.' (Limerick Chronicle' editorial 14-10-'72, on the Clover Meats dispute.)

THE WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

EVERY worker knows that the central issue in the conflict in the North of Ireland is Partition. This issue is whether the Protestant community has the right to remain in the United Kingdom State, or whether it should be forced, against its clearly and oft-expressed will, into a state, under the control of Southern Nationalists.

This is the political division between the Catholic and Protestant communities, and this is the political division between Catholic and Protestant workers. It intrudes into every aspect of social life. It worms its way into every working class home, every factory, every trade union and every political party.

A century of frustrated attempts to build a united working class movement, capable of overthrowing capitalism in Ireland, has demonstrated beyond question, that until there is general agreement on the rights and wrongs of this question, no real challenge to capitalism can be made.

Such an agreement can only be based upon a scientific understanding of the Partition conflict. Myths are no use to the working class. For far too long has the working class movement, in Ireland, been satisfied with nationalist mythology. It is time to end that situation, and remove once and for all the only obstacle to working class unity.

The Workers' Association has been formed for this very purpose. Its objective is to promote understanding of the national conflict within the working class movement, to mobilise workers for the democratic settlement of the national conflict and to break

the influence of nationalism in the working class. The Workers' Association bases its policy on the fact that two nations exist in Ireland. It totally rejects the myth, created and propagated by the Southern ruling class that Ireland is a single nation.

While rejecting the demand of the Catholic ruling class in the South to exercise its rule over the Ulster Protestant community, the Workers' Association stands opposed also to Protestant nationalists who seek a way out of the national conflict through oppression of the Catholic minority in the North. Such policies can only intensify, not eliminate, the national conflict. And by intensifying the conflict they drive even further apart Catholic and Protestant workers. The Workers' Association has but one demand:

Full recognition of the right of the Ulster Protestant nation to remain a part of the state of its own choosing. Full recognition of the democratic rights of the Catholic national minority in Northern Ireland/UK state and of the Protestant minority in Southern Ireland.

ACCORDING TO RECENT PRESS REPORTS John Mulcahy, the Irish-born multi-millionaire, who entertained President Nixon during his Irish visit two years ago, contributed 255,000 dollars (\$108,000) to Nixon's presidential campaign fund. Mulcahy's name, along with 283 others, appears on a list released by Nixon's campaign committee after the committee was threatened with court action by Common Cause, a citizens' lobby group. The list covered contributions collected up to March 9 last, totalling approximately five million dollars. It is not known if Mulcahy gave a further donation in the last 27 days of the election campaign when Maurice Stans, Nixon's chief fund raiser, undertook a crash collection programme.

The published list shows that the Chicago insurance magnate, Clement Stone, topped the 'gift' chart by giving two million dollars. Stone, who also gave the same amount to Nixon's fund in 1968, now has achieved the distinction of being the largest known donor in American political history. The highest previous on record was the 1.5 million dollars that the New York Governor, Nelson Rockefeller, received from his mother in his losing bid for the 1968 presidential nomination. The Kennedy family may have donated more. Full records are unavailable for John Kennedy's campaign in 1960 and the costly primary election of Robert Kennedy in 1968.

An insight into the workings of the American political system was given by Russell Baker in an 'Irish Times' article on March 9 this year. The article, syndicated by the 'New York Times' News Service, stated: 'Oddly enough, a lot of people have been surprised to learn that the International Telephone and Telegraph Co. (ITT) is putting up 400,000 dollars (or maybe 100,000 dollars—the figures are still confused) to help pay for the Republican national convention in San Diego this August. Apparently large numbers of people are ignorant of the mechanics of the American political system and for this reason, a simple explanation may be justified.'

'In setting up a political system, you have two choices: you can have public politics, or you can have commercial politics. In America, the decision was to go with commercial politics. The big argument in its favour was that public politics would be so dull that nobody could possibly get rich from a public politics system.'

'In commercial politics, companies with lots of money ('moolah' to use the old Yale euphemism) shop around for a candidate or a political party whom they can sponsor. When they find one, they make an appointment and ask if there is anything that they, as American citizens dedicated to the proposition that life is sweeter if you have a friend at the Justice Department, can give him. The candidate or party, as the case may be, replies, 'moolah', 'moolah', 'moolah', 'moolah'.

'Very few sponsors, of course, will put money into a party or a candidate without receiving some advance idea of what they will get for their 'moolah'. For this purpose, most candidates and both major parties prepare what are called 'pilots'. These are carefully produced dramatisations which give the potential sponsor the flavour of the campaign or government which he will be investing in ...

'If the sponsor is, like ITT, a conglomerate with antitrust problems, it might show several of the conglomerate's executives attending a wienie roast and pitching horseshoes with lawyers from the Justice Department's antitrust division.

moolah, moolah by tony crowley

'One of the most democratic republics in the world is the USA, yet nowhere ... is the power of a handful of billionaires over the whole of society, so crude and so openly corrupt as in America. Once capital exists, it dominates the whole of society, and no democratic republic, no form of franchise, can alter the essence of the matter.' Lenin.

'Democratic candidates, who are just as dependent as Republicans on the sponsorship of oil corporations, have for years been showing oil men a "post-election pilot" in which the entire Senate finance votes unanimously to compel all widows and orphans to pay higher taxes on their stock dividends so that the Treasury can raise enough money to give higher tax refunds to oil men.'

'Many persons, of course, would like to sponsor a candidate or political party. This is a fortunate circumstance for the Government, for if anybody at all could afford to be a sponsor it would be very difficult for the Government to do some

of its favourite things.

'Imagine, by way of example, what might have happened had Father Philip Berrigan, the militant anti-war activist now on trial in Federal court, had the 'moolah' to sponsor a big piece of the Republican national convention. Would the case have been settled out of court, at a wienie roast perhaps with some of the fellows from the internal security division of the Justice Department?

'It is a dirty question and it would be nasty to ask it if commercial politics were not such a dirty business.'

There is no mystery here. Politics in America is merely the tool of capitalism. James Connolly, in the 'Re-Conquest of Ireland', summed up this position when he wrote: 'Whatever class rules industrially will rule politically, and impose upon the community in general the beliefs, customs and ideas most suitable to the perpetuation of its rule. These beliefs, customs, ideas become then the highest expression of morality and so remain until the ascent to power of another ruling industrial class establishes a new morality.'

American democracy is not even thinly-veiled: it is simply and openly a cover for the naked rule of capital.

THE CONNOLLY MOB

WHAT IS THE POLITICAL and social record of the mob in history as against the record of the other classes? There was a time, stretching for more than a thousand years, when the mob was without power or influence when the entire power of the governments of the world was concentrated in the hands of the kings, the nobles and the hierarchy. That was the blackest period in human history. It was the period during which human life was not regarded as being of as much value as the lives of hares and deer; it was the period when freedom of speech was unknown, when trial by jury was suppressed, when men and women were tortured to make them confess crimes before they were found guilty, when persons obnoxious to the ruling powers were arrested and kept in prison (often for a lifetime) without trial; and it was the period during which a vindictive legal code inflicted the death penalty for more than 150 offences—when a boy was hung for stealing an apple, a farmer for killing a hare on the roadside. It was during this undisturbed reign of the kings, the nobles, and the hierarchy that religious persecutions flourished, when Protestants killed Catholics, Catholics slaughtered Protestants and both hunted Jews, when man 'made in God's image' murdered his fellow-man for daring to worship God in a way different from that of the majority; it was then that governments answered their critics by the torture, when racks and thumbscrews pulled apart the limbs of men and women, when political and religious opponents of the state had their naked feet and legs placed in tin boots of boiling oil, their heads crushed between the jaws of a vice, their bodies stretched across a wheel while their bones were broken by blows of an iron bar, water forced down their throats until their stomachs distended and burst, and when little children toiled in mine and factory for 12, 14 and 16 hours per day. But at

last, with the development of manufacturing, came the gathering together of the mob, and consequent knowledge of its numbers and power, and with the gathering together also came the possibility of acquiring education. Then the mob started on its upward march to power—a power only to be realised in the Socialist Republic. In the course of the upward march the mob has transformed and humanised the world. It has abolished religious persecution and imposed toleration upon the bigots of all creeds; it has established the value of human life, softened the horrors of war as a preliminary to abolishing it, compelled trial by jury, abolished the death penalty for all offences save one, and in some countries abolished it for all; and today it is fighting to take the children from the factory and mine, and put them to school. This mob ... with one sweep of its grimy, toil-worn hand, swept the rack, the thumbscrew, the wheel, the boots of burning oil, the torturer's vice and the stake into the oblivion of history, and those who today would seek to view those arguments of kings, nobles and ecclesiastics must seek them in the lumber room of the museum.

'In this civilising, humanising work the mob had at all times to meet and master the hatred and opposition of kings and nobles; and there is not in history a record of any movement for abolishing torture, preventing war, establishing popular suffrage, or shortening the hours of labour led by the hierarchy. Against all this achievement of the mob, its enemies have but one instance of abuse of power—the French reign of terror—and they suppress the fact that this classic instance of mob fury lasted but eight months, whereas the cold-blooded cruelty of the ruling classes which provoked it had endured for a thousand years.'

'All hail, then, to the mob, the incarnation of progress!' (James Connolly, 'Labour, Nationality and Religion'.)

THE THALIDOMIDE STORY

john boyle

part two

IN THE FIRST PART of this feature an outline of developments in the country where thalidomide originated, West Germany, was detailed. What was described there was repeated to varying degrees through many countries. The numbers involved are not easily quantifiable. The total number of cases of phocomelia (afflicted children) throughout the world has been estimated at between 8,000 and 10,000. Of course this does not take into account the even greater numbers who were affected by nerve damage, which may in West Germany alone have totalled up to 40,000. In Great Britain the number of deformed children is around 400, while in Ireland there may be as many as 100.

The 'Sunday Times' as was indicated before, has launched and maintained up to date an ongoing crusade on behalf of those affected in Britain. This has brought them into a major confrontation with the company that marketed the drug in Britain, Distillers (Biochemicals) Ltd. The situation as this is written is that the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Widgery (no less) delivered his judgement on November 17th on the High Court granting an injunction restraining the newspaper from publishing an article telling how the drug which produced the deformed babies came to be made and sold in Britain. This is a clear example of how the law will always bend to serve the interests of capital in bourgeois society. Even though ten years have elapsed since the effects of the drug were widely publicised, and many of those affected struggled on without any assistance since, the Lord Chief Justice presents as the considered opinion of the inherited traditional wisdom of the British legal system a judgement that states simply:

'In the end, this appears as a very simple case in which a newspaper is deliberately seeking to influence the settlement of pending proceedings (pending for ten years!) by bringing pressure to bear on one party'.

This judgement indicates what 'freedom of the press' means in practice. Newspapers may be 'free' so long as they do not attempt to influence the workings of large-scale capitalist enterprise or interfere in the meanderings of hide-bound legal institutions. Some freedom!

At any rate the 'Sunday Times' in its editorial of 19-II-'72 as signalled its intention of continuing to treat all other relevant matters in the case, and has mustered a formidable array of support in the House of Commons. Altogether 254 MPs, as of the date mentioned above, have signed a motion sponsored by Jack Ashley, Labour MP for Stoke South and chairman of the All-Party Committee for the Disabled, calling on Distillers to face up to their moral responsibilities in the matter--in a phrase, to pay up. Most of the MPs are from the Labour Party, but the balance is made of 45 Conservatives, 3 Liberals and 1 Scottish Nationalist. At time of writing a Commons debate on the motion is imminent.

It is here that the 'Sunday Independent' took a hand. Having duly noted the impact that the 'Sunday Times' had had with their articles the Irish newspaper plunged in with a two-page splash in their issue of October 22nd. After even a brief examination of the 'Independent's' history and its new-found concern for 'social problems', one is certainly disposed to doubt the motives behind this surge of social conscience.

For instance the 'Sunday Times', whatever its allies behind the scenes, has had to face the opposition of a very powerful industrial giant, Distillers Company (Biochemicals) Ltd., which, apart from its since discontinued pharmaceutical interests is even better known for the large range of whiskey and gin that it manufactures and distributes (whiskeys include Johnnie Walker, Black and White and Haig; among their vins are Gordons, Booths and High and Dry London).

The 'Sunday Independent' has no such powerful giant to take on: as the brand of thalidomide sold here derived from the parent company, Chemie Grunenthal, the enemy is to say the least remote. This factor, while it has been a source of grievous delay for the Irish parents of thalidomide-damaged children, gave the paper another of those petty chances of making a mock paper attack on the Fianna Fail-controlled Department of Health.

While the Department has displayed its usual arrogant, callous, attitudes towards the victims of this distressful condition, the fact remains that the issue was approached in a narrow party-political context as a means of advancing the claims of Fine Gael.

As if to demonstrate the point that was made at some length in the first part of this feature regarding the nature of sensational journalism the story on thalidomide, having provoked no worthwhile response from 'Sunday Independent' readers, was after the initial splash hastily buried and there has been no follow up from the paper. This is no great surprise, as the 'Sunday Independent' was not at any time basically interested in doing anything constructive for the 100-odd families in the country unlucky enough to have a thalidomide-damaged child.

No, its main point was (1) to boost its own circulation and (2) to score a few party political points at the expense of the Fianna Fail administration. Cynical, in fact--scarcely anybody remembers the feature now, but it doubtless added to the image which the paper has been assiduously trying to create in the past year or two of being to the forefront of the liberal, trendy bandwagon. At any rate its a fair indication of the level at which politics is played out in 'The Pope's Green Island'.

In case it should be pointed out that the 'Sunday Independent' didn't entirely drop the thalidomide story after their two-page 'investigation', it might be added that a few letters from readers were published in the following week. Two of these letters warned against the less publicised side-effects of everyday Aspirin and in a following issue that supreme 'controversialist' Ulick O'Connor advocated a boycott of the company's drink products.

It would be monotonous to go into the ramifications of the long drawn out trial, together with the even more tedious preliminary investigations in West Germany, which took nearly ten years in all, but it is worth noting that the major reason for the incredible length of the proceedings was the purposeful delaying tactics of the company fronted by its legal representatives. These tactics meant that a final verdict in the trial was not formally declared, though the West German court declared in principle against the company.

A fund of some £13,000,000 was set aside by the company to meet the needs of about 3,000 victims. When broken down, and after the disbursement of a lump sum of between £3,000 (maximum) and £125 (minimum) were allotted--quite ludicrous figures in fact bearing in mind the serious malformations suffered by many of the children, involving frequent expensive treatment, and the incalculable loss of their wage-earning capacity, not to mention the onward rush of inflationary tendencies in the imperialist world economy which will certainly serve to make these sums seem positively laughable in the not too distant future.

Indeed the figures may turn out to be even more miserly than they already seem, if the experience of those afflicted in Britain is any indication. A Justice Hinchcliffe was called upon to determine the sort of payments that should be made in sample thalidomide cases. It should be noted that the British company have denied negligence, but to show 'good will' in this instance agreed to pay 40% of whatever might be mutually agreeable between both sides--the deduction of 60% to serve as an indication that the company in no way admitted liability. But the parties were unable to agree (not surprisingly) and thus an actuary was called in to prepare appropriate estimates. The armless Richard and legless David were the two subjects chosen as representative. The actuary calculated that figures of just over £106,000 and just over £60,000 were proper in the respective cases.

But the good Justice, a true pillar of the establishment, dissented. Acting on the accumulated bourgeois prejudices of a legal system which alone is guaranteed to serve the interests of the ruling class he decided that the law did not need to be guided by evidence from economists and actuaries on inflation, life expectations, earnings and taxation. However this genius arrived at his figures, he determined that David should get a lump sum of £28,000 with further payments totalling £24,000, and that Richard get £18,000 and £14,000--both sets of figures to be subject to the 60% reduction above mentioned. At this point it is appropriate to quote from the necessarily muted reaction of the 'Sunday Times' to the proposed settlement: (editorial, September 24, 1972).

'The figure in the proposed settlement is to be £3.25 million, spread over 10

years. This does not shine as a beacon against pre-tax profits last year of £64.8 million and company assets worth £421 million.'

Comment is superfluous.

It should be clearly understood that the Distillers company in Britain have already paid out £1 million to some 60-odd claimants, and that the figures above discussed have not been paid out and are indeed even yet the subject of ongoing legal wrangles. But, however bad things may be in Britain, those who have suffered in Ireland have even less to be grateful for. Not one Irish parent who has a thalidomide-damaged child has received a single penny by way of compensation. This is because of legal complications in the parent country which as yet shows little sign of being settled.

It would be perhaps carrying cynicism a little too far but might not one suggest that in the great happy European club that we are all soon to enter Jack and Willy might get together and iron out this little problem. It is interesting to note in passing that the newly re-elected West German Social Democratic Party, who in 1962 as the opposition party had demanded State aid for thalidomide victims, proved to be no better than the Christian Democrats when they finally took over the reins of government in pushing through the case against Chemie Grunenthal. Yet another illustration of the uselessness of the Social Democratic parties in the face of the huge and even not so huge industrial enterprises of the imperialist world. But of course our Jack will sort it all out: Jack, to be sure, will 'make representations.'

An incidental point, but one that seems representative of the two cultures from which they spring, is the following.

In the correspondence that the series of articles in the 'Sunday Times' elicited, and in the features themselves, none of those directly involved felt it necessary to hide under the cover of non-de-plumes. In the 'Sunday Independent' piece two of the three cases quoted were written under fictitious names.

Is this not in itself the clearest possible indictment of the closed puritanical Church-ridden culture that in Ireland is even yet a potent source of political reaction? Evidently the stigma that attaches to mental illness in this country has been found by the parents of those responsible to be also applicable to the thalidomide-damaged children. In this context it is not inapposite to quote from the writers of the book ('Thalidomide and the Power of the Drug Companies') who have provided much of the source material for this article, Henning Sjostrom and Robert Nilsson:

'In certain parts of southern Europe the birth of a deformed child is still considered to be punishment for the sins of the parents. Italian doctors told us that such attitudes probably contributed to the fact that so many thalidomide babies born in Italy and Spain had been hidden away by the parents.'

One question: how far may one see the hand of the Catholic Church—that bastion of 'revolution' in the North of Ireland—in the shaping of such attitudes in the above two Catholic countries, and how applicable is the above question in the Irish context?

In case it should be thought that the thalidomide disaster is but an isolated

episode and that other companies are in no way open to such risk, another large concern—Imperial Chemical Industries, no less—is now faced with potential claims for damages amounting to £5 million following a recent decision in the British Courts of Appeal. Two former employees of ICI were awarded substantial damages after it had been found that in working for the company in the 1940s they were exposed to an anti-oxidant called Nonox S which is a direct cause of inducing cancer of the bladder.

The most startling revelation regarding these cases was the disclosure of ICI documents which showed that they knew very early on of the danger that Nonox S could cause cancer. In the High Court Mr. Justice O'Connor found that ICI should have known by January 1940 that the betanaphthylamine impurity in Nonox S was a cancer hazard. And it was further agreed that ICI certainly did know of the danger in 1943, if not indeed as early as 1940. And yet Nonox S was not taken off the market until 1949! Here again is clear evidence of a basic fact of life in an imperialist economy—the precedence of profits over persons.

The state of the medical profession and the pharmaceutical industry is in fact a matter which should be of tremendous public concern. But the law in such affairs again reveals its inherent bias towards the status quo—it is an extraordinary fact, for example, that there is no legal requirement on the makers of cosmetics to subject their products to clinical testing. Similarly agencies for testing drugs are inadequate. So long as profits take precedence, it will remain so.

This, in brief, is the thalidomide story brought up to date. It is an appalling indictment of bourgeois society that such a catastrophe happened and even worse that, having happened, nothing like adequate compensation has been paid out to the victims and those who must of necessity look after them.

But without turning a blind eye to the human tragedy that one company's blind quest for profits visited upon a large number of unsuspecting innocents, how far removed is this from many other profitable enterprises that have literally been concerned with spreading death throughout the world. One thinks of the US firms specialising in the production of napalm and other biological forms of warfare, not to mention the vast empires that have been built up through the production of the more conventional types of weaponry.

But to return to the matter at hand. How sure can we be that a tragedy such as thalidomide will not happen again? What are the chances that one of the stock items from our daily diet may be the agent that carries death or disease to a mass of totally unsuspecting consumers?

This is not scaremongering. While companies compete with one another even in producing the very goods that we now regard as basic to our eating and drinking habits, is not the chance always there that the cutting of costs in production may involve a reduction in the already inadequate laboratory tests that are meant to vet each product prior to its release among the general public? As competition and the scramble for profits heightens in the developing imperialism of today this prospect looms ever larger.

(concluded)

PRIESTS AND PROVOS

IT IS LITTLE SHORT of a miracle how many social 'revolutionaries' have sprung up in the midst of the Irish clergy. Ever since the Catholic nationalist campaign in the North was given renewed vitality with the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, there has been no shortage of theologians of violence who have been prepared to bless the murderous attempt to subdue another nationality and sprinkle it with liturgical holy water.

The latest of such Provo public relations exercises occurred—coincidentally, on the same day, November 6—in both the 'Irish Press' and the 'Irish Independent'. P. MacCathmhaoil, CSSb, of the Irish Antagonist Centre, Swinford, was somewhat restrained in his support, but by means of a few judicious quotes (finishing up with a somewhat truncated piece from the mouth of his Saviour, 'I have come not to bring peace ... but war ...') sought to put the possibly anxious minds of some Catholic patriots at rest—in other words, gave them a carte blanche to 'bomb ahead, lads—the Lord is with you'.

But the piece in the Fianna Fail daily left MacCathmhaoil's pseudo-philosophical ramblings far behind, and betrayed in peculiarly heightened form the bizarre mixture of Catholic breast-thumping allied to a backward political stance that would be hard to equal anywhere else in the world. This has long been the main distinguishing feature of Irish republicanism.

After some kind words about fellow clerics who had pointed the way forward the writer—a Rev. P. Twohig, Dublin 9—got to the meat of the matter. We were told quite unashamedly 'that it was a deep love and unwavering adherence to the Tridentine Mass that moved the men of '16 and the majority of present-day Provisionals. I speak from experience.' Doubtless. Leaving aside the inaccurate reference to at least some of the 1916 insurrectionists, this is surely one of the most blatant attempts to justify the campaign of Catholic Nationalism to coerce the North.

The open sectarian nature of this statement also helps to give some idea of the political influence of the Church upon the Republican South, and surely must serve to confirm any Northern Protestant in his firm resolution to have nothing whatever to do with the warped mentalities that have come to be associated with the drive towards a 'United Ireland'. It would be a 'holy' country controlled of the likes of the murder-monger Twohig and his Provo friends. (He evidently knows the lads well) With these impeccable credentials Fr. Twohig is staking an early claim to the office of Chaplain to the New Ireland.'

* 08913

NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

Make sure to get your copy of the 'LIMERICK SOCIALIST' each month during 1973. One year's subscription £1.

WHEN THE SECTION of the report of the National executive dealing with the Limerick strike was reached at the annual conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress no delegate offered to discuss it. The secretary, William O'Brien, commented on the 'want of inclination to take up its consideration.' He said that 'in view of certain statements made it was desirable to have the report discussed; those statements ought to be repeated at Congress, where they could be met.'

A Limerick delegate, Mr. O'Connell, Irish Clerical Workers' Union, took up the challenge and came forward to state the strikers' case. 'He would say something but not for mere destructive criticism. There were many things being said which he believed should be cleared. He knew the Executive did good work; at the same time he felt that the National Executive did not do everything that should have been done. The Limerick strikers were let down by somebody. Whether the strike was right or wrong—he believed it was right—but only £1,000 was received from the whole workers of Ireland after it had been on for ten days. There was something wrong about the hesitation of the National Executive in going to Limerick, and generally speaking, there was some kind of feeling that nothing would be done. He did not know whether the National Executive did not feel they had powers to support the workers of Limerick. He had been told by one member that the Executive felt they had not the power to do certain things. If they had not the power, they should have had it to call on the workers to help in any such question. It was said that the Chairman had obtained a permit and bought his railway ticket, yet he did not go personally to Limerick. He did not know whether that was true or not; but if it was it was a very serious thing for their Chairman as representing the workers of Ireland. Then there was some other statement that a proposition made for the evacuation of Limerick was made by the National Executive as a way to break up the strike. He did not say that was so. He believed whoever said that spread it as a false report. But he was convinced the Limerick strikers were let down. He had information that if they had held out for another week they would actually have won.'

A Cork delegate, Mr. O'Duffy, said: '... The bulk of the delegates knew quite well that the National Executive had in view other methods than those ultimately adopted and they also probably knew why those other methods were not resorted to. He was not going to blame anybody. It was the result of subterranean influences.'

The general secretary, William O'Brien, followed and stated that 'the lying and slanderous charges that were in circulation should be repeated before Congress where they could be met. A persistent campaign of lying and innuendo had been going on against the Executive. It was stated that the Executive let down the workers of Limerick and he demanded that the charges be repeated there or be dropped once and for all. So far, out of that Congress of the workers of Ireland not one delegate made the statement that the Executive let down Limerick. The nearest one came to it was 'somebody let down the workers of Limerick.' Who was that somebody? Let them have that out. Mr. O'Connell was in Limerick and he ought to be able to say who that somebody was. They would like to have the benefit of his views. It was easier to see the right course after the event. Would Mr. O'Connell or somebody else stand up and tell Congress what ought to have been done on the occasion of the Limerick strike? The first intimation the

THE LIMERICK SOVIET

by jim kemmy

part 9

Executive received was that the strike was on. The received a telegram on the Monday of a strike against the permit system. He sent a telegram to Limerick wishing the strikers success and asking to be kept informed of events. He got no reply, and then rang up the newspaper offices for information. He got what information appeared in the evening papers. On Tuesday there was no further information. He still awaited a reply to his telegram but none came. On Wednesday he got together all the available members of the Executive and they discussed the matter informally. In the absence of information they considered that the best thing to do was to send a man to Limerick. Accordingly Mr. Johnson was asked to proceed there. Later two Limerick men arrived and gave them information of the position in Limerick as it stood at their departure. They had a meeting of the resident members of the Executive and he summoned the non-resident members by telegram for next day. Not a moment was lost. When they met they decided the best thing was for all the members to adjourn to Limerick. It was pointed out that no trains were running on Good Friday. Mr. Cassidy had a meeting of his Association on the Monday and Mr. O'Lehane was also engaged with his Association. Consequently, Tuesday was the first day on which the National Executive could go to Limerick. Any apparent delay was due to these facts, over which they had no control. They gave Limerick all the assistance in their power. Anything that was not done was to lack of machinery rather than lack of desire or earnestness on the part of the Executive ...'

James C. O'Connor, Secretary Limerick Trades Council, said: 'There was a good deal of talk about the Limerick strike. Coming from Limerick and speaking for the workers there he declared that Limerick was not let down. They held they made the greatest fight ever made by any united body of workers in a big city. They showed the world that the workers were able to run the city in spite of the presence of any foreign Government. They held they won in Limerick and they blamed nobody for letting them down. They fought their own fight, with the help of the Executive and fought well.'

Thomas Farren, Dublin, said: '... They had held meetings in Dublin at which a deputation from the Emergency Committee of the Railwaymen attended. It was not fair to the railwaymen to say they did not do the right thing. The Emergency Committee pointed out that if the Limerick railwaymen ceased work the whole system of the Great Southern was put out of gear. They said: 'We are prepared to take our stand with the other workers if they come out on a national strike.' It was not fair that one section of the workers should fight the battle for other sections. They decided that the proper thing to do was to adjourn the Executive meeting to Limerick

... They went to Limerick, not, as they told the Strike Committee, to take charge of the dispute but to give any assistance in their power. They did all that was in their power to help them. They had joint meetings of the Executive and Strike Committee. Certain questions were discussed among them the question of a national stoppage of work. Under the Constitution they had no power as an Executive to order a national stoppage of work. They then agreed that a National Conference might be called, but made it clear if they did call national stoppage it would be only a demonstration for a few days as they realised that under the existing state of affairs they were not prepared for the Revolution ...'

T. C. Daly, Railwaymen, said: 'He stood up not to defend the National Executive but the organisation to which he belonged. It had been assailed by the usual cowardly methods of innuendo. It had been said in Limerick that it was the railwaymen who let down the Limerick strikers. It was the first time at least in his memory that a charge had been made against the railwaymen of failing to respond to the call of labour ... The railwaymen were prepared to meet the criticism directed at them ... he had only to get the word from the National Executive to press the button and the railwaymen would have answered the call.'

Walter Carpenter, International Tailors, Dublin, said that 'coming to the Congress he was under the opinion he was going to get the names of the men who let the Limerick workers down. Names had been bandied about by men who were told by others to do it and the others were present in that hall but they had not got the moral courage to get up and say to the Executive of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress what they said to a few ignorant members of the working class in Dublin. He had been listening to these stories and had been told that William O'Brien and Johnson would be pulled to pieces at that Congress. He asked when he was told the story who would do it, and he was told that P. T. Daly would do it. The whole discussion had been a vindication of the action of the Executive. The National Executive could not have taken any other action than what they did, and he said that as one who was an advocate of the General Strike. He knew what the General Strike meant—that it has got to be backed up by guns, that it meant a Revolution; and until they were prepared for Revolution there was no use calling a General Strike. Unless they were prepared to use the guns and hoist the Red Flag from one end of the country to the other, there was no use in condemning the National Executive because they did not call a general strike. The workers were not class conscious enough, not educated enough, and not ready for a General Strike. When the day came that they were class conscious and educated the workers would not want leaders—they would go out themselves. He could listen no longer to members of the executive being abused. Limerick itself had declared emphatically that it was not let down. He hoped that the day would soon come when they would be ready for the General Strike, when they would be able to put in practice in Ireland what they had done in Russia and establish a Soviet Republic.'

Michael Keyes, Limerick Railwaymen, said: 'He was there to answer for the conduct of Limerick Railwaymen during the strike. They had nothing to be ashamed of. They had consulted with the delegates from Inchicore and the Executive could defend their action.'

(to be continued)

GERRY BURKE

hibernian hades

NORTHERN IRELAND ... land of hate ... land of lies ... land of greed ... land of hypocrisy ... Gethsemane of the confused and stupid ... Calvary of bewildered innocents ... land of myriad obscenities perpetrated by frightened men ... Corpulent clerics, well satiated with this world's good things, slobber pious hypocrisies of Christianity, making hollow echoes across the valley of despair ... And the cascading blood of hope-bereft innocents flows on to swell the ever-widening river of hate ... Christianity ... sanctity of human life ... words ... words ... words ... Christianity in action in segregated schools ... words ... words ... words. Pseudo Christian pillars decree segregated schools ... children never meeting ... never knowing ... Curricula bloated with sectarian subjects ... distrusting ... despising ... degrading ... rejecting ... Diploma of hate ... breeding ground of the Provo ... hotbed of the bigoted Prod ... Is educational apartheid a fundamental tenet of Christianity ...? Is it fundamental to humanity ... The politicians (with few exceptions) ... ambitious ... image-building ... cavaliers of polarising polemics ... vying with each other in egotistical, emotive rhetoric ... The name of the game ...? A place in the political sun ...? A fable in a history book ...? Or the ever-ending, lucrative exposure on the telly, the radio and the press ... Each politician brandishes his own type of adjectival 'socialism' ... There are 'democratic socialists' ... 'republican socialists' ... 'Christian socialists' ... 'national socialists' and so many other permutations of these labels that Karl Marx might well have never lived ... Because of the failure to apply scientific socialism, the only real solution of working class unity is now as dead as the body of Marx in Highgate cemetery. ... The pawns in this obscene charade ... religious-regimented ... willy nilly ... human riff-raff ... The teenage Provo, high on the narcotic of Catholic conditioning, works out his mystical trip by dispensing his own brand of Christianity ... the bullet ... the bomb ... the conflagration of destruction ... The heritage of segregated schools makes it easier to bomb your segregated neighbour ... A greedy heritage of cloth ... obscene religious head-counting ... and all in the name of bloody Christianity ... Hibernian Hades ... jungle of hate and cruelty ... grist to the mill of the Boss, the sponsored politicians and the stooges of the cloth ... Will the nitro booms stir the divided workers to united class action ...? wake the stricken door ...? or disturb the slumbering 'common' man ...? Wait ... suffer on ... listen to the words ... words ... words. Meanwhile in the South the double-think jackals wait in drooling anticipation ... De Valera ... Catholic King of Ireland ...? King of Catholic Ireland ...? King of the counterfeit conscience ... instant do-it-yourself principles ... synthetic plastic democrat ... Jack Lynch ... blanched ... sanctimonious ... cunning ... Cosgrave ... permanently uneasy ... narrow ... maintainer of the status quo ...

upholder of capitalist law and order ... incorrigible reactionary ... Corish ... would-be social democrat ... practising politician ... has very rare rushes of socialist blood to his head, but is otherwise politically and philosophically eunuched by the Christian Brother ... convent-created mass mind ... mass outlook ... mass suspicion of socialist notions ... Red Revolution ('save the mark!') ... and all that ... Let us now recourse to a prayerful litany for the partial remission of all the torments of the Irish people, North and South:

'Shaft of Light ... Conor Cruise O'Brien speak for us. Succour in Embryo ... Noel Browne do not forsake us. Tower of Strength ... Willie Whitelaw lighten our load. Fountain of reason ... Dick Ferguson soften our angers. Mammoth Menagerie of Mammon ... O EEC wipe away our nihilistic

nationalism and succour the pain of the backlog of 50 years of political piety and economic incompetence.

Philanthropists of Europe ... O Sicco Mansholt, Willy Brandt anoint our sick industry with your monopoly capitalist holy oils ... update our farming and fisheries ...and please, O please, dear overlords, save our country from destruction ... Amen'.

(This prayer has immense spiritual and mental uplift, especially when intoned reverently between pints of porter at your local boozery, or when recited by small groups on factory or workshop floors during tea breaks. It has had enhanced grace when chanted in conjunction with the invoked intercession of His Holiness Blessed Oliver Flanagan, DD and His Extremo Unctuousness, political acrobat, tick-tack man and buffoon extraordinary, Deputy Stephen Coughlan, CC).

CLOSED SHOPS

part 4

THE PRESENT INTER-UNION CONFLICT in Limerick largely centres around different forms of the closed shop being operated at two factories recently established. At the Ferenka factory a closed shop agreement between the management and the National Electrical Engineering Trade Union is preventing members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union from obtaining work and their union from carrying out negotiations. While this dispute is between two craft unions catering mainly for fitters and other engineering workers, the other local disagreement concerns a closed shop being operated by a big general union against a small craft union. The Irish National Union of Woodcutters has claimed that four of its members were forced under pressure to join the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union at the Fiberman factory without going through an agreed procedure for clearance sanction.

A three-man disputes sub-committee from the Federation of Irish Building Trade Union was appointed to investigate the Fiberman dispute. Arrangements to hold the inquiry in Limerick were agreed on three separate occasions, but each time the ITGWU sought a postponement, twice at 24-hours' notice. Because of the ITGWU's enforcement of the closed shop against a fellow member union and its attitude to this general question, other building unions, at national and local level, see the Fiberman case as the thin end of a wedge designed to squeeze the small craft unions out of existence. Because of this fear there is a strong possibility that the Federation of Irish Building Trade Unions will burst apart.

The Ferenka dispute has also serious implications for the unions involved. The Ferenka company is a subsidiary of the multi-national firm, AKZO, and has received an £11 million grant from the Industrial Development Authority since it set up here on July 21, 1970. AKZO is the ninth largest chemical company in the world, in terms of 1971 sales of chemicals, chemical fibres, pharmaceuticals and other products. The company was formed in November 1969, when AKU NV (previously known as Algemeene Kunstzjde Unie NV) merged with Koninklyke Zout-Organon NV.

At June 30, 1972, AKZO employed a total

of 102,200 workers, 30,700 of which were employed in the Netherlands. The UK subsidiary company is British Enkalon Ltd., which is the third largest producer of chemical fibres in Britain, and in which AKZO has a 62% share. Ferenka Ltd., is AKZO's most important plant for the production of steelcord for tyres, although it also has a plant in West Germany which supplies the same product. The company also has subsidiaries and associated firms in America, Belgium, Spain, France and Sweden.

AKZO was faced with over-capacity in the European fibre market in 1971 and threatened to close some of its plants. (Meanwhile, the company was expanding its production of the same products in Brazil.) With the co-ordinated efforts of the International Federation of Chemical and General Workers, and workers at AKZO factories in the Netherlands, Britain, West Germany and Belgium successfully resisted the threatened closure of plants in the Netherlands and Belgium. In order to save 5,000 jobs, the workers occupied the threatened factories and, with the support of simultaneous strikes in West Germany, forced AKZO to withdraw their plans and to re-negotiate.

The entry of Southern Ireland into the European Economic Community brings the Ferenka dispute into the mainstream of international working class affairs. The inevitable increase in the international co-operation and solidarity of workers, as a result of the activities of multi-national companies and the internationalisation of capital, will prevent subsidiaries like Ferenka from adopting restrictive national policies.

It is a measure of the weakness of Irish trade unionism that, at a time when other European workers are forging class links across national boundaries Irish workers still continue to conduct their industrial organisations in a narrow, sectional manner. A trade union which organises a closed shop against its fellow workers at the instigation of an employer is doing no service to the working class. As European workers come closer together any attempts in Ireland to divide worker from worker must be strenuously resisted.

(to be continued)

D08913

COUNCIL COMMENTARY

INVITATION: The Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Limerick City Council hereby request the pleasure of your company at a Grand Christmas Ball in King John's Castle. Dress: Respectable or Fancy.

Gardai have issued the following warning to pre-Christmas party-goers in the city: 'A number of counterfeit invitations have been in circulation for the past few weeks. We advise people to be wary of approaches in the street by smooth-talking City Councillors trying to pawn off useless tickets for this political ball.'

The Garda statement sparked off a raging controversy about who had issued the invitations. An emergency meeting of the Council debated the matter and Cllr. Mick Pearls accused the Mayor of trying to disrupt a 'free booze-up.' 'He's still crying after his five bloody quid on the Plassey caper,' he said and added that one could have a great feed of porter for a fiver.

'I want no unruly elements in here,' declared the Mayor, who went on to say that he was not used to fancy balls. 'Enough of that kind of talk,' shouted Ald. Steve Coughlan. 'You're off-side.' 'I'll call in Paddy D'Arcy ... and he can tell you a lot about crooked balls.'

'What, no ball?' said Sen. Ted Russell philosophically, and there go my profits ... Dan O'Connor will have to increase his prices over the Christmas.' The uneasy Senator mused wistfully to himself: 'A pity it's not like the time when I was Mayor and Chipperfield's Circus came to town ... I really took them to the cleaners.'

'Tis a terrible thing to say that this ancient city can't have a Christmas ball,' said Ald. Pat Kennedy. 'I had a great time with Ann Fitz at Ned Walsh's ball at Plassey. What with the time that's in it, the mistletoe and all, I might even get off the mark with Fitz at the Christmas ball. And Spartacus might write a few more words about me for my contribution to cultural affairs.'

'Go away oura that ...' shouted Ald. Mick Lipper, 'you still have your First Communion money.'

'Let us hear from the Manager,' roared Ald. Coughlan, waving his hand in the direction of the indulgent Mr. McDermott, who opened his eyes and began to recite the 1954 Management Act. 'Tis OK, Tom,' said the Mayor, 'you can relax' we've all become intoxicated with the Christmas spirit.'

'It would seem that the Council is divided on the issue,' said the Manager, 'and the members are inclined to make a ball of the matter.'

One of Limerick's top social reporters, Seamus O Cinneide, treated 'Limerick Leader' readers to a vignette of the event: 'This year's Grand Christmas Ball was an outstanding success. As the frostyslates on the houses in the Courtyard of the King John's Castle glistened alluringly in the moonlight, one instinctively felt that the venue was most appropriate. The menu also had a local flavour and included Mary Ann Walsh crubeens, Park cabbage and a newly-named special dish called 'Paddy Devlin' ham.

Music was expertly dispensed by the Billy Conway Ensemble, with Pat McGuigan expertly pulling the strings. The Mayor, Paddy Kiely proved a resourceful MC, and managed to keep himself buoyant all night through.

Surprise of the night was the performance of the Council members who proved to be a veritable reservoir of talent, hitherto hidden from the public. The musical selections were popular and varied. The Mayor himself set the ball rolling by proposing a witty toast, 'picked up', he said, 'at the Jesuits past pupils' dinner'.

'To hell with the man
May he never grow fat,
That carries three faces
Under one hat.' (protracted applause).

Songs were lustily sung by Cllr. Jack Bourke ('The Pride of the Coombe'), Mick Kennedy ('The Sound of Silence'), Ald. Mick Lipper ('Mr. Inbetween'), Pat Kennedy ('It's Too Soon to Know'), Cllr. Joe Quin ('The Pub's Got No Beer'), Micky Earls ('I'm in the Mood for Love'), Cllr. Gus O'Driscoll ('Beer, Beer, Glorious Beer'), Sean Fielding ('Lingering On').

But the highlight of the evening was the recitations, and the off-beat nature of many of the rather personalised performances caused agreeable surprise. Cllr. Frank Glasgow stepped out of character to give us some of the juicy bits of the 'Midnight Court'. This was followed by Ted Russell, who declaimed his own composition, 'Master Harry Rides Again'. Cllr. Vincent Feeney was not outdone and his offering, 'Give Me, Crumpet, Crumpet, Crumpet' was well judged. Frank Leddin obliged with 'Don't Call Me, I'll Call You' while Cllr. Clem Casey's 'Ode to a Chicken-Choker' was a delicately-balanced effort. Cllr. Rory Liddy's 'In the Shadow of Dum-Dum' was a finely-wrought cry from the heart. However, Tony Brommell's 'Dissertation on Sean-na-Scuab' was slightly out of place and was more suited to the Training College. Steve Coughlan gave us a preview of his next Christmas card and his limerick had many subtle undertones:

'O Limerick is again in the news.
We cater for contrasting views.
I welcome all people,
And treat them as equal.
Except, of course, Maoist and Jews.'

Walking home through Limerick's Chartered streets after this exciting ball, one's feeling of elation was further enhanced by the stark grey-coated finger of John's Cathedral, silhouetted against the Garryowen skyline. Memories of old Limerick superimpose themselves on the mind's canvas ...'

THE GLASS HOUSE KID

A CURIOUS LETTER appeared in the 'Limerick Leader' on October 28. It was written by a local republican, Ruairi O hIci, and it stated:

'Mrs Marcia Williams, who is Mr. Harold Wilson's political and personal secretary, and author of 'Inside Number 10', makes the following interesting observation in her newly-published book:

'One thing that struck me as amazing at No. 10, where space is so desperately needed, was the existence on the first floor, on the other side of the quadrangle, of the Church Appointments Office. I realised, of course, that the Established Church has to be administered and that Prime Ministers still are responsible for the appointments of Bishops to dioceses. But why should all this be done from No. 10?'

'Why, indeed? I am asking the same question, but not for the same reasons as Mrs. Marcia Williams. About a year ago her boss had the effrontery to speak about the Twenty-Six Counties' "theocratic" Constitution. People in glass houses should not throw stones, especially a member of a party responsible for the ecclesiastical promotion of Bishop Barnes of Birmingham and the Red Dean of Canterbury.'

A casual reader of Mr. O hIci's letter could be forgiven for forming the impression that it is Britain and not Southern Ireland that is the theocratic state. While it is true that the Church of England (a body with no real power in Britain to-day) is the established Church and that the Catholic Church in Southern Ireland is not established, this does not give a full or balanced picture of the situation.

Anglican bishops, unlike their Irish Catholic counterparts, are members of a Legislature (the House of Lords), but have little influence on the British Government or on the lives of the vast majority of the British people. The Catholic bishops here hold their vast social power independent of the State and it is the State that has to answer to the bishops for its conduct. But Mr. O hIci has shown little interest in making this position clear but instead, through duplicity and verbal trickery, exploits the purely formal position of the Church of England for his own propaganda purposes.

Mr. O hIci's reference to Hewlett Johnson is also of interest. The Dean's words about his opposition to the capitalist system might well be considered by all other clergymen: 'If as a minister of religion, I attacked gambling, immorality, deceit and a lack of interest in culture and spiritual things, and left unchallenged one of the major causes from which these evils sprung, I was straining at gnats and swallowing camels.'

And on the question of bishops and glass houses, perhaps Mr. O hIci might be interested to learn of the peculiar situation in Spain where Chief of State General Franco is permitted to name six candidates to fill a vacancy in the Spanish diocese. The list is sent to the Pope, who then selects three names among the six. Franco then picks one of the three. (The details were announced by the Vatican earlier this year when a new decree on the 'election' of bishops came into force on May 21.)

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